

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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SUBJECT: NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS LOW KEY AND INOFFENSIVE TO ALL

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING PRACTICE OF RECENT YEARS GOB NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION SEPT 9 WAS MODEST AFFAIR, EVEN THOUGH THIS YEAR'S EVENT COINCIDED WITH 50TH ANNIVERSARY ATTEMPTED LEFT-WING COUP 1923. BULGARS PUT BEST FOOT FORWARD AND RESTRAINED FROM ATTACKS ON IDEOLOGICAL ADVERSARIES AND EVEN ANNOUNCED HOPE OF GREATER ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH US. MOST OF PRESS COVERAGE OF CELEBRATIONS GIVEN OVER TO AWARD OF GOB HIGHEST MEDAL TO BREZHNEV. END SUMMARY.

2. SEPTEMBER CELEBRATIONS AROUND BULGARIA APPEARED TO FOLLOW PAST PRACTICE OF PARADES OF WORKERS IN MAJOR CITIES. NO MILITARY UNITS ON DISPLAY AND EMPHASIS WAS ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 29 YEARS OF SOCIALIST RULE, WITH PARTICULAR NOTE ON FULFILLMENT OF DECEMBER PLENUM PROMISE TO RAISE LIVING STANDARDS. SOFIA PARADE WAS RELAXED AND ONLY HOUR AND A HALF LONG GIVING PARTICIPANTS SOME OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY TWO-DAY HOLIDAY IN GOOD WEATHER. UNLIKE LAST YEAR,
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HOWEVER, NO SIGNS DISPLAYED ATTACKING EITHER US OR CHINESE

AND EVEN INNOCUOUS REFERENCES TO "IMPERIALISM" NOT IN EVIDENCE.

3. KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT PARTY, GOVERNMENT AND POORLY ATTENDED DIPLOMATIC GATHERING SEPT 7 DELIVERED BY BCP SECRETARY IVAN PRUMOV WAS LACK-LUSTER AFFAIR, NOTABLE ONLY FOR ITS RESTRAINT IN PASSING OVER OPPORTUNITY TO ATTACK PRC OR US. (CHINESE, IT WILL BE RECALLED, WALKED OUT OF LAST YEAR'S SPEECH AND MANY NATO CHIEFS OF MISSION HAVE DECLINED TO ATTEND WHAT HAS USUALLY BEEN DIATRIBE AGAINST EVILS OF IMPERIALISM.) PRUMOV, IN REVIEWING NEW ATMOSPHERE IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS, SAID THAT "GOB IS UNDERTAKING NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH US". THIS IS FIRST HIGH-LEVEL PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT TALKS ARE CONTEMPLATED.

4. DURING COURSE OF OFFICIAL RECEPTION, GOB OFFICIALS MADE OBVIOUS EFFORT TO BE FRIENDLY AND CORDIAL WITH WESTERN DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES, INCLUDING OUR CHARGE. GENERAL IMPRESSION AMONG DIPLOMATIC CORPS IS THAT GOB MADE REAL EFFORT TO PUT BEST FOOT FORWARD DURING CELEBRATIONS. CHINESE COLLEAGUE OBSERVED THAT THIS YEAR GOB "DIDN'T DO WRONG THINGS".

5. THERE WAS NO DISCERNABLE IMPROVEMENT IN MINISTER OF DEFENSE DOBRI DZHUROV'S ORDER OF THE DAY OVER PREVIOUS ORDERS. IT WARNED THAT IMPERIALIST FORCES HAD NOT LET DOWN THEIR GUARD. AS EVIDENCE HE CITED CONTINUING DEFENSE EXPEDITURES IN US, FRG, UK, FRANCE AND JAPAN (SIC) TO DEVELOP NEW WEAPONS AND GROWING STRENGTH OF NATO FORCES, "ESPECIALLY ON SOUTHERN BORDERS OF BULGARIA". DZHUROV ADMITTED THAT INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE HAS IMPROVED BUT CALLED FOR VIGILANCE TO COUNTER "FLAMES OF WAR WHICH THREATEN WORLD PEACE".

6. ONE TWIST THIS YEAR WAS PLAY GIVEN TO AWARD OF BULGARIA'S HIGHEST HONOR, "HERO OF PEOPLES' REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA" TO BREZHNEV. ALMOST ALL OF FRONT PAGES SEPT 9 PAPERS DEVOTED TO AWARD, INCLUDING CITATION BY STATE COUNCIL THAT, EVEN BY NORMALLY LAUDATORY BULGARIAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STANDARDS, IS REMARKABLE ENDORSEMENT BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIALIST WORLD. MEDIA IN PAST TWO DAYS HAS CARRIED LENGTHY COMMENTARIES PRAISING THE AWARD AS "EVIDENCE OF BREZHNEV'S PLACE IN HEARTS OF BULGARS". ALTHOUGH AWARD IS NORMALLY RESERVED FOR CITIZENS OF BULGARIA, ONE EAST EUROPEAN COLLEAGUE REMARKED THAT LEGAL QUIRK SHOULD POSE NO PROBLEM FOR GOB AND "BESIDES, THEY HAVE A PRECEDENT. . . THEY AWARDED IT

TO STALIN, TOO". WHATEVER THE PRECEDENT, ADULATION OF
BREXHNEV WHICH HAS BEEN WIDESPREAD SINCE JULY, REACHED
NEW HEIGHTS IN RECENT DAYS. OF COURSE, THE SOVIET
"SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WAS CONFIRMED ONCE AGAIN WITH THE
SOVIET AMBASSADOR ENJOYING SPECIAL SEATING ARRANGEMENTS
AND ONE SOVIET FLAG FOR EVERY BULGARIAN FLAG.
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